

Living

Nativity

Scene

Dec. 18, 1966

BETHEL, MAINE, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1966

**LIVING NATIVITY SCENE —
TRULY A COMMUNITY
PROJECT, TO BE HELD DEC. 18**

Mrs. Irma Thompson was elected chairman for Bethel's Living Nativity Scene, to be presented again this year on the Bethel Common on Dec. 18. Initial plans were made at a well-attended planning committee meeting held Monday evening at the home of Mrs. Emily Saunders.

Several committee people have already volunteered their services and are in positions in this united effort. There are several costumers, make-up artists, bell ringers, shepherds, a property manager, an over-all lighting manager, a publicity manager, and the Town Manager's promise of help with snow removal. The guiding stars will be in place; the kindly animals will be there too, and some angels. This is all in preparation for the Scene.

Everyone interested in committee work, or desiring to be in the cast, should call Mrs. Thompson, preferably on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday morning. The cast is still being assembled and more help is needed in the costuming and make-up department.

The stable and manger used last year is apparently in storage. Anyone knowing of their location is asked to notify Mrs. Thompson.

THE OXFORD COUNTY CITIZEN, BETHEL, MAINE, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1966

**PLANS PROGRESSING WELL
FOR LIVING NATIVITY
SCENE ON DEC. 18**

Mrs. Irma Thompson, chairman of Bethel's third annual Living Nativity Scene scheduled for Dec. 18, held a very successful meeting with the costuming and make-up committees Monday evening. All details in these areas were finalized.

A dress rehearsal has been scheduled for Saturday afternoon, Dec. 17, at the Fire Station. The costuming committee has requested that the shepherd boys bring a clean sheet to be used as a basis on which to build their costumes. The sheet may be white or color tinted. The boys should plan to wear long-sleeved solid color shirts or sweaters, and should wear warm but not bulky clothing.

All remaining plans for the pageant are going smoothly. The fine community response and enthusiasm is heart-warming. It indicates that this annual event is truly a community project.

Living Nativity Scene to Be Presented at Bethel

BETHEL — Final preparations for the living nativity scene at the Common, Sunday evening, were scheduled by participants and the committee last Sunday. A change in performance times has been made as follows: 4:30, 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.

Bethel Girl Scout Cadettes, directed by Mrs. Rodney Brooks and Mrs. Hope Tibbetts, will serve hot chocolate and coffee to members of the cast between pageant showings.

Mr. and Mrs. James Fiske have invited members of the cast and their families for supper at the New Yorker after the pageant.

A 30 minute tape of Christmas music telling the Christmas Story, while the cast is acting it out, will contain a running commentary done by Robert Kenniston.

The cast is as follows: Mary, Margaret Fiske; Joseph, Greg Glines; Baby, Carolyn Fiske; Wisemen, James Fiske, Lawrence Davis, Roland Glines; Shepherds, James Lowe, Daniel Vogt, Claire Batchelder, Merton Brown, Timothy Hutching,

James Davis, Warren Tibbetts, Allen Walker, Randy Chretien, Roger Dock, Jack Brooks, David Thurston, Larry Jacobs, Charles Jacobs, Allen Burgess, Richard Waldron, William Eames, Lindy Chayer and Douglas Farrar.

After the live nativity scene is over, Mrs. George Taylor, assisted by her son, Bruce, will place her life-sized painted nativity figures in the stable for the remainder of the Christmas season.

Others assisting in this special event are: Bell ringers, who will ring the church bells ten minute before the hour, Mike Tibbetts, Mike Chretien, Lincoln Fiske Jr., Seth Timberlake, Peter Kailey and Steve Hastings.

Roderick McMillan is responsible for clearing the common and traffic. Sound will be directed by Charles Farrar. Fencing by Richard Carter, Phil Chapman, Bruce Bailey and Norman Dock. Animals have been loaned by Warren Hastings, Stanley Moore, Claire Batchelder and Eileen Saunders. Make-

up, Mrs. David Thompson; costumes, Mrs. Roland Glines, Mrs. John Frankevitz, Mrs. Richard Littlefield, Mrs. Lincoln Fiske, Mrs. Charles D. Merrill, Mrs. James Fiske; decorations, Eileen Saunders and Rebecca Andrews; and props, Mrs. Donald Brown and Mrs. Robert Kenniston.



NATIVITY SCENE COMMITTEE AT BETHEL — The committee in charge of planning for the annual Living Nativity Scene, to be presented Dec. 18th on the Bethel Common, is shown above. Seated are Mrs. Robert Tift, left, and Mrs. Roger Favreau. Standing, left to right, Mrs. David Thompson, Mrs. John Frankewicz and Mrs. Lincoln Fiske.

Brown Photo

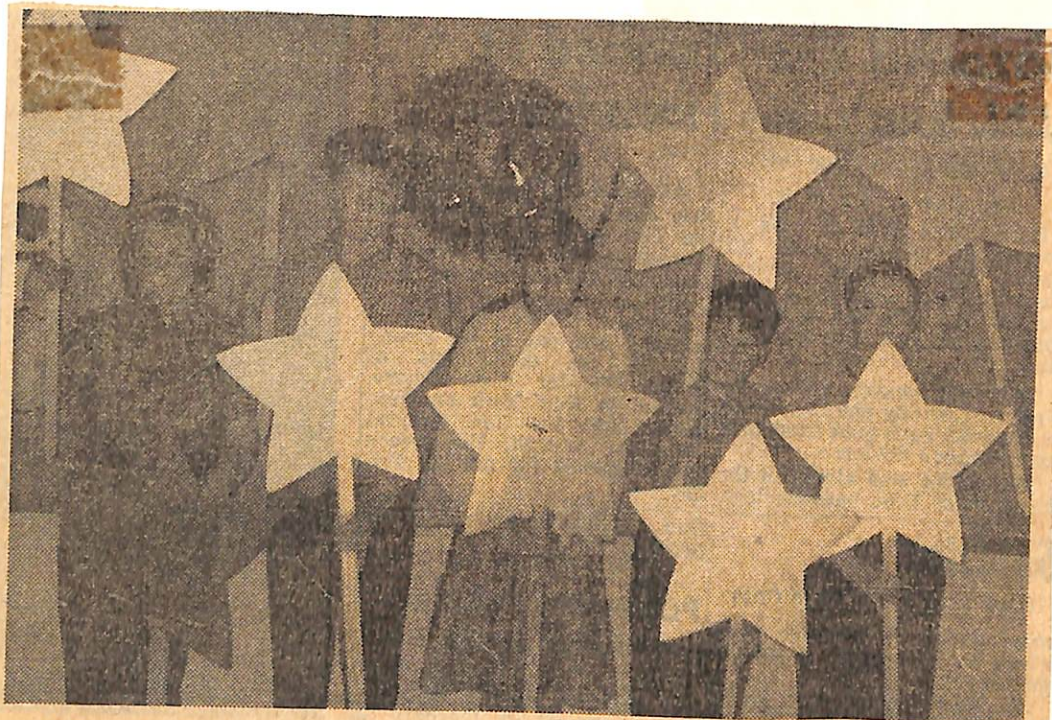
Bethel Common Is Site of Nativity Scene Portrayal

BETHEL — Townspeople of on all roads leading into Bethel. Bethel will present their third annual outdoor Living Nativity Scene, Dec. 18. Three portrayals will be enacted on the Bethel Common at 4:30, 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. Church bells will chime 10 minutes before each presentation to alert townspeople and guests; and Christmas hymns will sound through the town as crowds gather at the manger.

Visitors from all surrounding areas are invited to follow the "guiding stars" to the manger. These stars have been placed

The 30 minute pageant scene is presented in pantomime. The beautiful Christmas story is reverently told in a background commentary, interluded with appropriate Christmas hymns. The nativity area on the Common will be aglow with lights. Participants, artistically costumed, will give an inspiring presentation.

After the pageant scenes are over, Mrs. George Taylor will place her life-sized hand painted nativity figures in the stable for the remainder of the Christmas season.



Walker Photo

BETHEL STUDENTS PREPARE "GUIDING STARS"

Students at the Crescent Park School are making stars which will direct the public to the live Nativity Scene at the Common, Dec. 20. Left to right are Debbie Stearns, David Kenniston, Beatrice Paine, Mark Bailey and Bruce Smith.

BETHEL — A live Nativity Scene will be enacted on the Bethel Common during the evening of Dec. 20th. Along with the scene the choirs of each church in town will pre-

sent a short interlude of Christmas music.

Persons and groups assisting in this project, which was originated by Mrs. Sue Farrar, are costume committee headed

by Mrs. Roland Glines; Boy Scouts, under the direction of leader Ernest Perkins and Stanley Davis, making the stable and manger; CPS children preparing stars, under the leadership of Miss Helen Varner and Principal Ryder; Blake MacKay and Fred McMillin, lighting; Paul Pierce, special lighting; Mrs. Rosabelle Tiff, publicity.

"LIVING NATIVITY SCENE" PLANS COMPLETED

Bethel townspeople will present their third annual outdoor "Living Nativity Scene" on Sunday, Dec. 18. The pageant will be presented on the Bethel Common at 4:30 p. m., 5:30 p. m., and 6:30 p. m.

Visitors from surrounding areas are invited to follow the "guiding stars" to the manger. These stars, made and mapped out by Crescent Park School children, will be placed on all roads leading into Bethel. This heart-warming community project enhances lives of all who share in this experience.

The sharing of plans and anticipation started before Thanksgiving. From the beginning all committee workers maintained an attitude of solemnity, enthused and determined to keep this third pageant scene at the high level of acceptance as it has been in the past. Plans are completed and the final rehearsal scheduled for Saturday, Dec 17, at 4:00 p. m. on the Common.

Committees include: Mrs. David Thompson, general chairman; Mrs. Charles Farrar, director; Mrs. Donald Brown, property; and Mrs. Robert Tifft, publicity.

Guiding stars: Frederick Raynes, principal of Crescent Park School, with Miss Helen Varner and her sixth grade students; Costumes: Mrs. Lincoln Fiske, chairman, Mrs. Alvin Parth, Mrs. Roger Favreau, Mrs. Warren Hastings, Mrs. Edmond Vachon, Mrs. Austin Conover, Mrs. Emma Howe, Mrs. Roland Glines, Mrs. Wilbur Myers, Mrs. Dana Brooks, Mrs. Murray Thurston and Mrs. Norris Brown.

Make-up: Mrs. John Frankovicz, chairman, Mrs. Fernand Favreau, Mrs. Thomas Jeffries,

continued on Page Five

"LIVING NATIVITY SCENE"

continued from Page One

Mrs. Geraldine Shimamura, Mrs. Drew Webster, and Mrs. Stanley Merrill. Snow clearance and traffic control: Roderick McMillin; Lighting, Frederick McMillin and Blake MacKay; Special lighting effects, Eugene Tebbets and Stephen Trinward; Sound effects, Clayton Crockett; Erection of stable and flooring, Bethel Boy Scouts under direction of Irving Cummings; Animals, Sheep, W. E. Graves; Oxen, John Coolidge; Horse, Eileen Saunders; Burro, Dr. James Hudson; Hay for flooring and animals, William Chapman II; transportation of animals, Dr. James Hudson, Bruce Bailey, and William Chapman, II; Fencing, Richard Carter, Richard Waldron and Henry Domkowski; Christmas trees to surround scene: American Legion; decorating of trees by the American Legion Auxiliary; Costume Sewing, Mrs. Bruce Bailey and Mrs. Horace Maxcy; Refreshments for cast between pageant scenes, Bethel Girl Scouts under the direction of Mrs. Albert Smith, Mrs. Colwyn Haskell and Mrs. Richard Vaughan.

Lewiston Daily Sun

12/5/67



Barbara Brown Photo

PARTICIPANTS IN BETHEL NATIVITY SCENE —

Some of the participants for the Living Nativity Scene to be shown as an angel, and Andy Davis (left) and Gerald Scott be held Dec. 17 are shown above. Betsy Lynn Smith is Smith as shepherds.



LIVING NATIVITY CHAIRMAN AT BETHEL —

Miss Suzanne Kneeland, Bethel, has been named chairman of the annual Living Nativity Scene to be held Dec. 17 at the Bethel Commons. The first planning meeting was held Wednesday night at the home of Mrs. Charles Farrar. Other committee members and people to appear in the pageant will be announced at a future date. The production is a joint effort of all the churches in the Bethel area as well as other interested people.

Name Workers, Participants for Bethel Nativity Scene

By BARBARA BROWN

BETHEL — As the Christmas season nears, guiding stars are being placed on all roads leading to Bethel noting the fourth annual Living Nativity Scene to be held Dec. 17.

Bells will ring from local churches in this united presentation as crowds gather at the Manger scene at the Bethel Commons. For the first time a live choral group will enhance the scene under the direction of James Owen. A commentary of the journey and manger scene will be given by Stanley Davis.

Chairman of the fourth annual Living Nativity Scene, Miss Suzanne Kneeland, Bethel, announces the following committees and participants for the 1967 presentation: Director, Mrs. Susan Farrar; publicity, Mrs. Rosabelle Tift; costume chairman, Mrs. Nellie Frankevicz; costume committee, Mrs. Beatrice Conover, Mrs. Christine Grover, Miss Donna Grover, Mrs. Geraldine Shimamura, Mrs. Patricia Vail, Mrs. Dale Thurston, Miss Nancy Bean, Miss Janice Kennaugh, Mrs. Joan Jeffries, Mrs. Marguerite Kendall, Mrs. Annette Carver, Mrs. Caroline Merrill.

Guiding Stars, Miss Helen Varner and her sixth grade students at Crescent Park School; placing and collecting stars, Mr. and Mrs. Eldon Greenleaf; special lighting effects, John Munger; general lighting, Charles Farrar, Blake MacKay and Frederick McMillin. Boughs for covering lights, Richard Waldron; telephone contactor, Mrs. Louise Lincoln.

Properties, Mrs. Arlene

Brown; snow clearance, Town of Bethel; traffic, Roderick McMillin; sound, Clayton Crockett; stable, backdrop and fencing, Bethel Boy Scouts and leader, Irving Cummings; animals, Dr. James Hudson, burro; W. E. Graves, sheep; John Coolidge, oxen; Misses Karen Brown and Donna Grover, horses.

Transportation of animals, Dr. James Hudson and Bruce Bailey; clean up, Henry Dombkowski; Christmas trees, American Legion; decorating, American Legion Auxiliary; hay, William Chapman.

Participants of the pageant are Shepherds, Danny Vogt, Lloyd Sweetser, Stuart Sweetser, Seth Warner James Perkins, David Hanscom, Frank Hart, Glenn Olsen, David Kenniston, Andy Davis, Topper Fiske, Bradley Fiske, Peter Howard, Donald Favreau, James Haskell, John Trinward, Seth Timberlake, Glendon Carver, Jeffrey Carver and Tom Robinson.

Shepherdess, Lisa Farrar; Shepherd Boy, Gerald Scott Smith; Wise Men, William Cousins, Norris Brown, and Ned Robertson; Angels, Betsy Lynne Smith, Judy Stowell and Kathy Haskell.

Holy Family, Mr. and Mrs. Roy B. Newton and Bethany Smith; bell ringers, Nazarene Church, Christopher Murphy and Dean Murphy; Methodist Church, James Thurston; Congregational Church, Curtis Cole, Kevin Trinward, Ross Timberlake and Michael Myers.

Refreshments for the cast between scenes, Bethel Girl Scouts and directors, Mrs. Loy Harrell, Mrs. Richard Vaughn and Mrs. John Shannon.



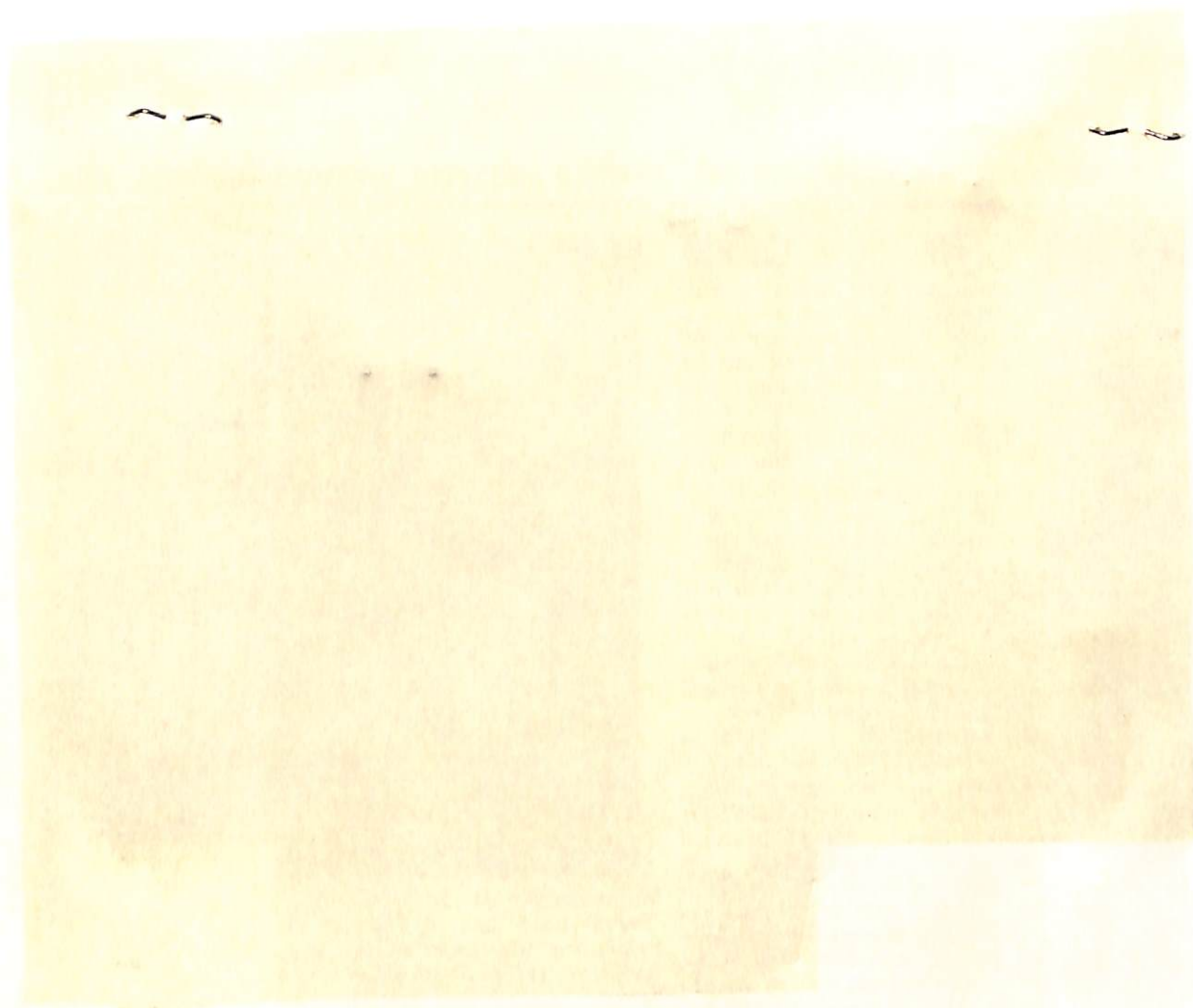
Committee members who met Sunday afternoon at the home of Mrs. Irma Thompson to finalize plans for the Living Nativity Scene. Seated left to right: Mrs. Irma Thompson, general chairman and Mrs. Rosabelle Tifft, publicity chairman. Standing left to right: Mrs. Sue Fiske, costume chairman; Mrs. Nellie Frankevicz, make-up chairman and Mrs. Beatrice Favreau of the costume committee.

REMINDER AND REQUEST! CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Will the mother of each of the shepherds in the "Living Nativity Scene" please be sure that her son has a clean sheet—white or colored.

Also, will she please place the sheet over his warm garments, and adjust it for length and fit, before he comes to the dress rehearsal at the fire station at 4 p. m. Saturday, the 17th.

The sheet should reach from under the arms just to the instep. And room for kneeling action must be allowed.



Bethel

MAINE, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1966



Shepherds and Angels who will participate in this year's living Nativity Scene, Nov. 18 on the Bethel common. Back row left to right: Seth Timberlake, Lincoln Fiske, Jr., William Eames and Richard Waldron. Front row left to right: Marilyn Hebert, Jeannine Merrill and Theresa Hebert.

Bethel's Living Nativity marks 14th anniversary

By John G. Ferland

BETHEL — The Bethel Living Nativity is in the midst of adolescence as it celebrates its 14th birthday this season. But counting years does not mean the Christmas pageant will someday die of old age.

Quite the contrary. Unlike many aspects of life since 1964, the Nativity has hardly changed its character. Although the Nativity chairman, Merton Brown, spends an enormous amount of time planning, coordinating and — yes — worrying, the Nativity has remained a relatively simple way to celebrate the birth of Christ.

"The Nativity scene is quite moving," says Susan Farrar, director and creator of the Nativity. "The townspeople share in doing it, which is what Christmas is all about. It's the citizens' Christmas gift to each other."

About 150 Bethel people are usually involved in the Nativity, Brown estimates. This year's pageant is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 19, at 4:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. on the Bethel Common.

Brown and Mrs. Farrar expect about 1,500 spectators to witness the two 20-minute performances featuring Christmas hymns and a living portrayal of the stable scene that marked Christ's birth.

Mrs. Farrar initiated the first living Nativity after she and her husband, Charles, returned to New England following 12 years in Phoenix, Ariz. Phoenix had a limited version of a living Nativity with only the shepherds played by people, she explains.

She realized how much impact a *totally live* Nativity scene would have, and tucked the idea in the back of her mind. Then Mrs. Farrar spent some time working with Jesuit missionaries from Pennsylvania. The missionaries felt that people should use their talents to glorify God, she recalls.

So Mrs. Farrar, who directs Bethel's

Children's Dance Theater, decided to put her theatre talents to work and asked for volunteers for the Nativity project.

"The biggest factor in getting the Nativity off the ground was determination," she explains. "Many people felt it couldn't be done, especially since people would have to stand out in the cold."

At first, some families were reluctant to let their infants play the baby Jesus in the biting December air. Mr. and Mrs. A. James Fiske were enthusiastic, though, and their then-baby girl, Carrie, became the first Bethel baby Jesus. This year, at age 14, Carrie will be a shepherd.

Community enthusiasm, rather than financial support, has supported the Nativity ever since. Everything involved is volunteer — from making costumes from old drapes, and building the stable and manger to letting animals roam the manger scene for authenticity.

There is no formal Nativity committee — just people who work for the chairman when asked to. Several people have had turns serving as chairman or co-chairmen. Mrs. Farrar handled the details for the first three years. She was followed by Doug and Sue Bane, Irma Thompson, Dave and Norma Salway, Ginger Kelly, Suzanne (Kneeland) Grover, Al and Jane Barth and Merton Brown, who has been chairman for four years.

Many groups contribute their time annually to the Nativity:

(1) Each church in town selects six shepherds, which include family groups whenever possible.

(2) Boy Scouts build the stable and Girl Scouts serve hot refreshments to participants between shows.

(3) Local people donate their animals. In the past, animals have included sheep, goats, calves, burros, oxen and horses.

"The animals are the hardest part of the

preparations," Brown admits. "They have to be transported before and after the pageant, and kept calm throughout it. The person who serves as gatekeeper has to be knowledgeable about animals."

One year some animals got stage fright and jumped the fence surrounding the stable when the music started, Brown recalls with a chuckle. Another time, a horse stepped on a shepherd's costume train and almost ripped the costume off.

(5) Elementary school children make large, cardboard stars which are placed at the sides of the highways that enter Bethel to lead motorists to the Common.

(6) Carole Fiske directs a 20-voice chorus. Some of the pageant participants are hand-picked by Mrs. Farrar and the chairman, including:

(1) The Holy Family — usually a couple who have a baby about three months old.

(2) Angels — three girls who are six or seven years old.

(3) Wisemen — usually three of Bethel's tallest men.

Although many Bethel citizens have participated in the Nativity several times, the roles are changed each year so everyone can become involved, explains Brown.

Through the years the Nativity has managed to conquer its growing pains. Once, someone suggested that the Nativity be moved to the athletic field behind the Gould Academy Field House so passers-by on U.S. Route 2 could see the scene.

That location would have taken away from the Nativity's intimacy, Mrs. Farrar replies.

The Nativity has not changed that much through the years and we don't want it to," she stresses. "I like the closeness of the Common where children can get near the Holy Family and the shepherds, and touch them if they want."

BETHEL, MAINE, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1966



THIRD ANNUAL 'LIVING NATIVITY SCENE' TO BE PRESENTED SUNDAY ON COMMON

Bethel townspeople will present their third annual outdoor "Living Nativity Scene" on the Sunday before Christmas, December 18. This pageant will be presented on the Bethel Common at 4:30 p. m., 5:00 p. m., and 5:30 p. m.

Church bells will chime ten minutes before each portrayal to alert the townspeople and visitors to follow the "guiding stars" to the manger. These stars, made and mapped out by school children, have been placed on all roads leading into Bethel.

This pageant is presented in pantomime. This Christmas story is told with a new background commentary done by David Thompson interluded with Christmas hymns. The scene is beautifully lighted, and participants give an inspiring performance.

The "Living Nativity Scene" is an outstanding gift to the Christmas season by Bethel people. Visitors from all surrounding areas are invited to attend and share in this heart-warming experience.

John Coolidge of East Bethel has provided oxen for use in this year's pageant. A "black" lamb will be provided through the courtesy of Gerald Harrington of Sunday River.

Participating in the pageant scene will be: Merton Brown, Thomas Davis, Daniel Favreau, Andy Davis, William Eames, Richard Waldron, Seth Timberlake, Lincoln Fiske, Jr., Robert Tift, Jr., Daniel Vogt, Claire Bachelder, Douglas Farrar, Mark Walker, James Perkins, Lloyd Sweetser, David Keniston, Dean Murphy, Roger Jackson, George Nickerson, Larry Robinson, William Robertson, David Thurston, Dana Brooks, Norris Brown, Jeanine Merrill, Theresa Hebert, Marilyn Hebert, Margaret Cousins, William Cousins, and Charles Cousins.

Bell ringers include: Stephen Richardson, Peter Thurston, Pedar Weise, Ronald Jackson, Chris Murphy and James Thurston. Additional bell ringers may be named from the Methodist Church.

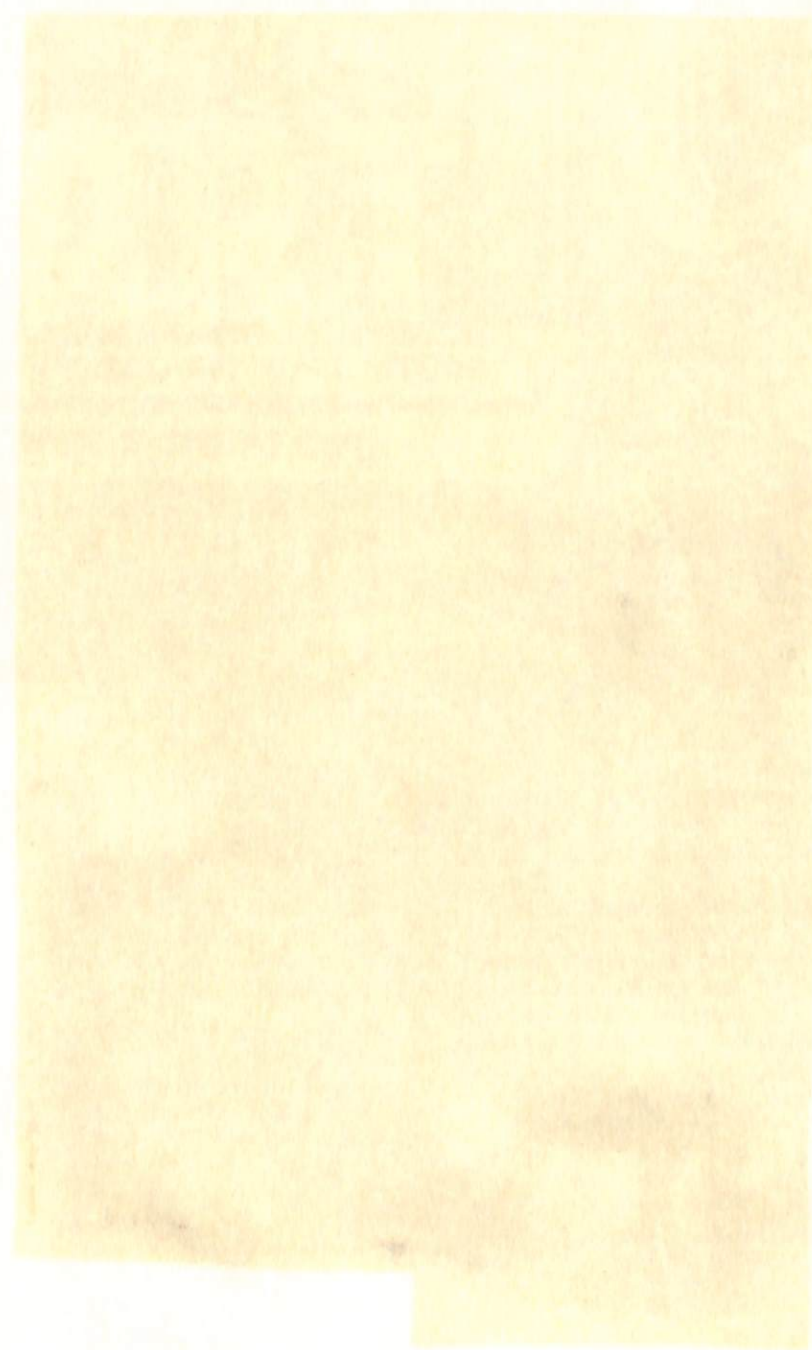
AT THE LIVING NATIVITY SCENE, SUNDAY, on the Bethel Common the men pictured above will play the parts of the Three Wise Men. Left to right: Norris Brown, David Thurston and Dana Brooks.



RUMFORD FALLS TIMES — THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1966



THREE KINGS who will appear in Bethel's Living Nativity Scene on Sunday, December 18, on the Bethel Common are: left to right, Norris Brown, David Thurston and Dana Brooks.



Bethel Presents Third Living Nativity Scene

Bethel townspeople will present their third annual outdoor "Living Nativity Scene" on the Sunday before Christmas, December 18. This pageant will be presented on the Bethel Common at 4:30 p. m., 5:30 p. m., and 6:30 p. m.

Church bells will chime ten minutes before each portrayal to alert the townspeople and visitors to follow the "guiding stars" to the manger. These stars, made and mapped out by school children, have been placed on

(Continued On Page 4)

Bethel Presents

(Continued From Page 1)

all roads leading into Bethel.

This pageant is presented in pantomime, and the Christmas story is told with a background commentary and Christmas hymns. The scene is beautifully lighted, and participants give an inspiring performance.

The "Living Nativity Scene" is an outstanding gift to the Christmas season by Bethel people. Visitors from all surrounding areas are invited to attend and share in this heart-warming experience.

Participating in the pageant scene will be: Merton Brown, Thomas Davis, Daniel Favreau, Andy Davis, William Eames, Richard Waldron, Seth Timberlake, Lincoln Fiske, Jr., Robert Tiff, Jr., Daniel Vogt, Claire Batcelder, Douglas Farrar, Mark Walker, James Perkins, Lloyd Sweetsir, David Kenniston, Dean Murphy, Roger Jackson, George Nickerson, Larry Robinson, William Robinson, David Thurston, Dana Brooks, Norris Brown, Jeannine Merrill, Theresa Hebert, Marilyn Hebert, Margaret Cousins, William Cousins and Charles Cousins.

General chairman of the pageant is Mrs. David Thompson. Mrs. Charles Farrar is the director. Mrs. Donald Brown is in charge of properties, and Mrs. Robert Tiff, publicity.

Guiding stars: Frederick Raynes, principal of Crescent Park School, with Miss Helen Varner and her sixth grade students; Costumes: Mrs. Lincoln Fiske, chairman, Mrs. Alvin Barth,

Mrs. Roger Favreau, Mrs. Warren Hastings, Mrs. Edmond Vachon, Mrs. Austin Conover, Mrs. Emma Howe, Mrs. Roland Glines, Mrs. Wilbur Myers, Mrs. Dana Brooks, Mrs. Murray Thurston and Mrs. Norris Brown.

Make-up: Mrs. John Frankiewicz, chairman, Mrs. Fernand Favreau, Mrs. Thomas Jeffries, Mrs. Geraldine Shimamura, Mrs. Drew Webster, Mrs. Stanley Merrill and Mrs. John Price. Snow Clearance and Traffic Control: Roderick McMillin; Lighting: Frederick McMillin and Blake McKay; Special Lighting Effects: Eugene Tebbets and Stephen Triward.

Sound Effects: Clayton Crockett; Erection of Stable and Flooring: Bethel Boy Scouts under direction of Irving Cummings; Animals: W. E. Graves, John Coolidge, Eileen Saunders and Dr. James Hudson; Hay for flooring and animals: William Chapman, II; Transportation of Animals: Dr. James Hudson, Bruce Bailey and William Chapman, II.

Fencing: Richard Carter, Richard Waldron and Henry Domkowski; Christmas Trees to surround scene: American Legion, and decorating of trees by the American Legion Auxiliary; Costume Sewing: Mrs. Bruce Bailey and Mrs. Horace Maxcy; Refreshments for cast between pageant scenes: Bethel Girl Scouts under the direction of Mrs. Albert Smith, Mrs. Colwyn Haskell and Mrs. Richard Vaughan.

This same newsrelease with a picture of shepherds also appeared in the Norway paper.

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BETHEL, MAINE, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1966

MANY VIEW 3rd ANNUAL "LIVING NATIVITY SCENE"

The community of Bethel once again presented their memorable Living Nativity Scene, Sunday, on the Common. Three continuous portrayals started at 4:30 p. m. Church bells chiming before each scene found crowds from Bethel and all surrounding towns gathering at the Manger. The story of this pageant has spread and become an anticipated event. The scene was filmed for WCSH this year and shown on Monday evening.

When the background commentary of the Christmas story started, the crowds became still. Lighting effects seemed to make the entire scene glow iridescently! Participants solemnly presented an artistic performance in pantomime.

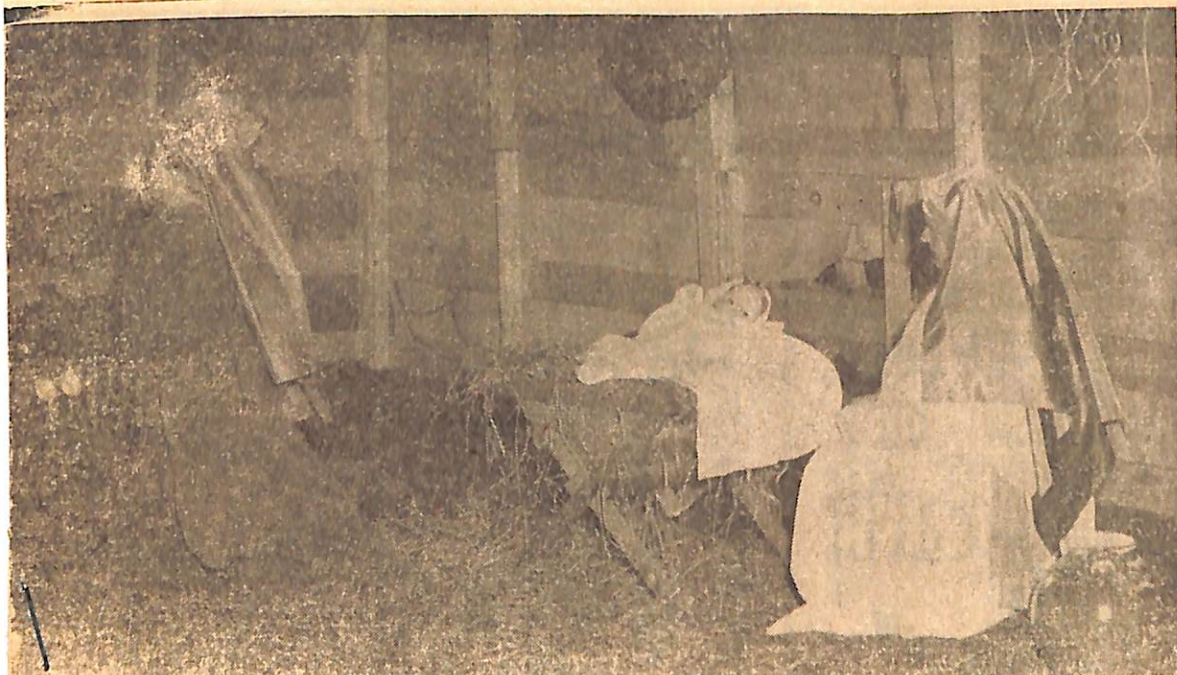
Three little angels added a peaceful effect to this year's scene as they beckoned the shepherds up a lighted pathway to the manger and then hovered over the scene. Shepherds arrived in groups. One shepherdess came with her black sheep, another on her horse. An appealing little shepherd boy was led on a burro and promptly placed his blanket on the Infant's feet. The three wisemen arrived in elegance and humbly offered their gifts.

The over-all effect of this scene was inspiring to observers. Said one misty-eyed viewer. "That's Christmas"! And another young boy expressed a desire to be a part of this pageant one day. Everyone who shared in this experience was greatly impressed and more aware of the real meaning and depth of Christmas. And this includes the townspeople of Bethel who have observed through the past three years in this project, that the Christmas spirit is truly felt and lived when people think about its true meaning and share it with others. Bethel people's fine contribution to the Christmas season is their gift to each other.



Brown Photo

CAST FOR BETHEL NATIVITY SCENE — Members of the cast for the third annual outdoor Living Nativity Scene to be presented here Dec. 18th are shown above. The angels are, left to right, Marilyn Hebert, Jeannine Merrill and Theresa Hebert. Shepherds are Williams Eames, Richard Waldron, Lincoln Fiske Jr. and Seth Timberlake.



Third Annual "Living Nativity Scene" presented on Bethel Common last Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. William Cousins and son Charles portrayed Mary, Joseph and the Christ Child.

Paradise Road
Bethel, Maine
Dec. 18, 1966

To the Editor:

Thank you for the coverage you gave to the Christmas Pageant. The Living Nativity Scene pointed the way to a happy Christmas.

Your readers will be glad to

hear of the harmonious community effort and to the response to the call of Christmas-time. Every committee worked earnestly and found cooperation on all sides even as far away as East Waterford and Norway.

The General chairman wishes to broadcast through your paper her appreciation of and gratitude for the unselfed work of all who contributed to that reverent and joyous expression of Christmas love.

Sincerely yours,
Irma Thompson,
General Chairman



Barbara Brown Photo

PLANNING BETHEL NATIVITY SCENE — Townspeople of Bethel are making plans for their eighth Living Nativity Scene. This 30-minute pageant will be presented on the outdoor Bethel Common Sunday, Dec. 19, at 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. Principals in planning efforts are above, from left, Burnie Morrill, co-chairman; Mrs. Ranald Stevens, chairman; and Mrs. Charles Farrar, director.



A timeless tradition: the living nativity

by David Solomon

BETHEL — The crowd of spectators had gathered quietly around the simple but well-constructed manger, waiting patiently as a dusting of snowflakes and Christmas carols filled the air with a sense of magic and reverence.

Then, the procession began, as the citizens of Bethel staged their 15th annual reenactment of the birth of Christ, complete with more than 40 costumed adults, children, live animals, a host of angels, and a full choir accompanied by a small ensemble.

With the narrator reading the appropriate chapter and verse from the Bible, the crowd was carried back in time, to the village of Bethlehem, and an event that changed the course of western civilization.

When Bethel dance instructor Sue Farrar, now retired, founded the Bethel Living Nativity 15 years ago, she established a tradition that has lived on. While the event has gained some recognition, it remains fundamentally an expression of faith and community spirit among the people of Bethel.

The prospects are likely that the Living Nativity will retain its local flavor, because Sue Farrar, in a letter handed over to her successor, outlined six basic principles which have guided the project for the past eight years.

Foremost among those principles, read each year to the pageant committee, is Farrar's conviction that "The Bethel Living Nativity shall never become commercialized for personal gain, in any way, shape, or manner."

Her letter asks that no promotion of goods, no sale of coffee or hot dogs, or any commercial affiliation be allowed to mar the pageant. "The true essence of Christmas must be observed," she wrote.

The founder of the pageant was equally firm in her belief that the event should always take place on the Bethel Common, and never moved to a larger site:

"It is the very close intimacy that is so precious, that must be observed. For the children to be able to reach out and touch the animals, and see the Holy Family close up is the beauty of this pageant. We can all see extravaganzas

on T.V., movies, or at Radio City Music Hall. This is our little pageant, and that's what makes it so special."

Farrar herself produced the pageant for its first eight years, but seven years ago turned the reins over to another director. A new coordinator-director has taken over each year since.

This year's coordinator and chorus director, Lyn Bristol, appeared tired, but bubbling with enthusiasm, as the characters suited up for the procession in the rehearsal room of the Moses Mason House museum last Sunday evening.

"It's almost an impromptu thing," she smiled, "except for a few people who take it a little seriously."

The extent of community involvement is widespread. In addition to the 40 characters (including shepherds, angels, chorus, and wise men) more than 100 other residents are involved in some aspect of the pageant, Bristol said.

And at least 80 per cent of those are adults, in keeping with another of Sue Farrar's re-

(Continued on Page 10)



A TIMELESS TRADITION was revived as townspeople staged their version of The Nativity. Mary was portrayed by Brooks and Vicki M.

INE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1978



ited in Bethel Sunday, as more than 40 costumed
e Living Nativity. This year the Holy Family (above)
orton

